

whether the nest was occupied since I had neither heard any sounds of nestlings nor had I seen the parent birds.

A House Crow was seen one afternoon clinging to the entrance tube of the nest (Fig. I) and within 30 mins. it had slowly peeled off the entire tubular projection, bit by bit, taking brief rests of 5 to 8 seconds on a nearby tree for every 7 to 8 mins. of work on the nest. Within half an hour the outer web of the egg chamber was exposed and the crow snatched away the 'contents'. I am unable to say whether they were eggs or nestlings. The point to be noted is, that once the entrance tube is removed and the outer web of the egg chamber exposed, it is very easy for the predator to reach the inner egg chamber by a simple insertion of its beak over the chamber wall (Fig. II). The crow was silent all the while.

The Baya's nest is naturally well protected from predators by its unique shape and location. Even if the entrance tube is tilted to 90° angle the contents will not roll out. I wonder if the method described above is the one normally adopted by predator birds while dealing with Baya's nests.

B.N.H.S. BIRD MIGRATION STUDY
GROUP,

POINT CALIMERE,
TAMIL NADU,

December 12, 1970.

K.S.R. KRISHNA RAJU

11. LITTLE SPIDERHUNTER, *ARACHNOTHERA LONGIROSTRIS* (LATHAM) IN THE EASTERN GHATS

During the banding session of the B.N.H.S. bird migration study project at Lammasingi (c. 17° 40' N., 82° 37' E.) in the Visakhapatnam section of the Eastern Ghats in April/May this year, we obtained five specimens of the Little Spiderhunter, *Arachnothera longirostris* (Latham).

This is an interesting record as the distribution of the species according to the FAUNA 3 (1929) is "Western Coast of India from Palnis and Nilgiris to Belgaum, East and South Assam, Eastern Bengal in Tipperah, Chittagong and the hills tracts from Manipur to Chin hills...". A similar distributional range is given by the SYNOPSIS (1961) also.

The present record is the first from the Eastern Ghats and adds northern Andhra to its known range.

B.N.H.S. BIRD MIGRATION STUDY CAMP,
FOREST REST HOUSE,
LAMMASINGI,
VIZAG DT., A.P.,

K.S.R. KRISHNA RAJU
JUSTUS P. SELVIN

May 28, 1971.

12. NOTES ON SOME INTERESTING BIRDS FROM THE SALT LAKES, NEAR CALCUTTA

(With two plates)

The North and South Salt Lakes together constitute a sizable expanse (c. 92 sq. km.) of low-lying swampland, skirting the eastern fringes of the city of Calcutta. In the recent past, they were connected with the lower reaches of the Hooghly River basin, were under tidal influence, and contained brackish water; hence the name 'Salt Lakes'. With the severance of the connexion with the Hooghly following silting of the connecting channels, they have become landlocked, freshwater swamps. They are extensively used as fisheries, consisting of a large number of fish-rearing tanks (locally known as 'bheri') of various sizes, separated from each other by narrow dikes ranging in height from a few centimetres to about 60 cm. above the level of water which is seldom more than 1.5 metres deep. The bottom is soft, oozy mud, made chiefly of decaying organic matter of animal and vegetable origin. The most conspicuous among the various aquatic plants growing in the 'bheries' are the Nal reed (*Phragmites karka*), Hogla bulrush (*Typha angustata*) and the Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), while various grasses and other herbs and shrubs grow on the dikes (Pl. 1 & Pl. 2, Fig. 1). Small hamlets (locally called 'ala') where the fishery workers live, are dotted here and there, and several species of planted trees of economic importance are grown there.

During a systematic survey of the bird and mammal fauna of the Salt Lakes and bird-ringing commencing from 1961, we have come across some birds which should not be there according to books. Likewise, interesting aspects of behaviour of certain birds have also been noticed there by us. As the detailed report of our observation may take some time to complete, we are taking this opportunity of recording those that may be of interest to the students of bird biology.